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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

MONDAY, August 14, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Economy in Cooking Summer Vegetables." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Of all the different foods we eat vegetables probably are most in need of scientific cooking. For vegetables suffer the most from poor cooking. Even the finest and freshest of garden products can lose their looks and their taste as well as much of their food value by unhappy experiences in the cooking kettle. No telling how many valuable minerals and vitamins go down kitchen drains every day, poured out with the cooking water. No telling how many are lost by overcooking. Yet these minerals and vitamins are the chief reasons why we eat vegetables, why vegetables are good for us.

I thought of this the other day when I ate dinner at the Jackson's. Sam Jackson is a wizard at gardening. Right out there in his backyard he raises the most beautiful tomatoes, string beans, lima beans, corn, lettuce and so on that you ever saw. Sam loves those vegetables in the garden and he loves them raw in salad, but once they're cooked, he doesn't want to touch them. Sally, his wife,-- can't understand that. "He turns up his nose at any cooked vegetable," she complains. Well, no wonder, Sally takes those delicious garden foods and boils them for hours, until most of the good is boiled out of them. Sally doesn't mind. She can eat anything, she says. And one vegetable tastes just like another to her.

I don't know what you think, but to me poor cooking of good fresh vegetables is just like throwing money away, spoiling the appearance and the taste and losing the food value all at the same time. Isn't it a shame for vegetables to go in the kettle fresh and full of flavor and color only to come out a dingy, unappetizing mass?

As we mentioned a minute ago, this loss from wrong cooking is less true of other kinds of food. Bread and cereals, fats, sweets, milk, eggs and meat can supply us with many of the food essentials, but not with enough of those minerals and vitamins we need for good health. We have to depend on the fresh foods to make up these lacks, particularly on the vegetables. If we ate all our vegetables raw, we would get more of these vitamins and minerals than we do. This is why nutritionists urge us to eat plenty of salads--raw cabbage, raw carrots, celery and lettuce and even raw turnips. The raw foods contain that illusive vitamin C which is most easily lost in cooking. The one exception to this rule is tomatoes. The acid in tomatoes prevents the destruction of vitamin C during cooking. Vitamin B is another vitamin that suffers from the combination of heat and water. But B is less easily destroyed than C. As for the minerals--well, I won't go into all the details about them. I'll just mention that when you cut vegetables up and cook them in water, some of the mineral content dissolves in the water.



If you believe in making the most of what you have, if you believe in economy and are opposed to waste, if you believe in saving ways of cooking-- then, you'll be interested in what the specialists have learned about cooking our summer vegetables.

The specialists say that baking stands first as a means of conserving food value. For example, take potatoes baked in their skins. They lose no minerals and very little of their vitamin content. The moisture in the potatoes themselves changes to steam and cooks them soft and mealy. That's why baked potatoes are such good foods for children. Baking in the skin is an ideal way to cook sweet-potatoes and squash also. Fortunately, our modern dishes of earthenware and tempered glass allow us to bake vegetables that we never used to cook by this method. Baked tomatoes, baked onions, baked beets, baked stuffed cucumbers and mixed vegetables baked in a casserole are all delicious and all good ways of saving food value.

But not all vegetables will bake successfully. For example, most green vegetables lose their color and flavor in the oven. So, for those that won't bake, we use other methods --boiling or steaming or panning. Steaming is the second best method for conserving food value, but here again we have to exclude green vegetables because they lose their attractive color. However, steaming is a satisfactory way to cook carrots, squash, sweetpotatoes, parsnips and wax beans.

What about panning? This is cooking in a covered pan on top of the stove using a little fat and no water. It's a good method for a few quick cooking vegetables like cabbage, okra and summer squash.

Of course, boiling is the method we use most. And, alas, boiling is responsible for a lot of damage. Here is the method that has probably spoiled the most vegetables as far as flavor and attractive texture and natural color are concerned. Vegetables boiled too long are generally mushy or flabby. They don't cheer our appetites at all.

Well, then, how to boil vegetables successfully without waste? The specialists offer these suggestions. First, use a small quantity of lightly salted water. Second, have the water boiling when you put the vegetable in. Third, cook only long enough to make the vegetable tender. When you're cooking green vegetables, color is a special consideration. To preserve the green, always leave the lid off the kettle. This will let any volatile acids escape and save the color so remember-- quick cooking until just tender in an uncovered kettle for spinach, brussels sprouts, green cabbage, green snap beans, and green peas.

What about using a pinch of soda in the cooking water to keep green vegetables green? No, say the specialists. If you use soda, you destroy valuable vitamins. Correct cooking will preserve the green without soda.

Now just one or two more hints about cooking vegetables. Vegetables like spinach cook down so quickly that they need no extra water. The water that clings to the leaves after washing will be enough. Other vegetables like Brussels sprouts and cauliflower need enough water to cover. To shorten the cooking time, have the water boiling when the vegetables go in, but boil gently after that. Remove the tough stems of leafy vegetables and that will cut down the cooking time.

Time now to plan an economy day menu. Let's feature some of the fresh vegetables from our garden in a vegetable plate. Green corn on the cob; Buttered fresh beets; Cucumbers cut in sections, dipped in batter and fried; Hot crisp rolls; and for dessert, Spanish cream with fresh fruit sauce.

Tomorrow: "Facts About Cosmetics."

